

*Memorial Service
for the Rev.
Rector of the Devon School*

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A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

THE CHAPEL OF EASE,

WORTHING,

ON THE

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY,

JANUARY 21st, 1877,

BY THE

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OF WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AND

CURATE OF THE CHAPEL OF EASE, WORTHING.

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P R E F A C E .

The Sermon that is now offered to the public was preached on the Sunday morning after the funeral of the late Miss Read, and although the Author would be the last person to claim for it any literary merit (for it possesses none), still, in deference to the wishes of many of the congregation, he has consented to place it in the publisher's hands, with the heart-felt conviction that it is utterly unworthy of her whose loss is deplored by rich and poor alike.

J. B. P.

January 23rd, 1877.

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"Because I live, ye shall live also."—John xiv., 19.

THE divine sentences contained in this chapter, from whence I have culled the few words upon which for a short time this morning I am about to ask you to fix your thoughts, were uttered by the blessed Jesus at one of the most solemn moments of His life—while He and His disciples were reclining at the Eucharistical Table.

It has been my privilege to preach many sermons in this sacred place founded on the very words of God Himself—given utterance to by the *purest* of lips that spake as never man spake—but I do not remember *any* so replete with comfort, so invigorating to the soul, so suitable for lifting it to the highest and holiest aspirations as the beautiful ones of the text.

In the case of the disciples, to whom they were first addressed, there was much to *distress* them at this time. They were about to part with their beloved tender friend. They were to be left *alone* to meet persecutions and trials. They were without wealth, without friends. And it is probable that they felt that His death would overthrow their plans and demolish all their schemes. Such sorrow could not be permitted to pass unassuaged. The presence

of Jesus was the guarantee of its *immediate* removal, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, whom He now promised to send them, would do for them, hereafter, all that *He* would have done had He continued personally with them.

There are two ways in which we may interpret the two terms of the text, either in the ordinary sense of the natural life, or in a metaphorical sense of the spiritual life: it is more than likely that *both* were intended by the divine speaker. In the ordinary sense of the *natural* life, our Lord's meaning could be paraphrased thus, "As surely as I shall rise from the dead—so shall ye. My resurrection shall be the proof and pledge of yours. I, the Son of God, came down from My home in heaven, and was born into this world of a pure Virgin, that I might become the first fruits of the grave; not indeed in the same way as Lazarus and the Widow's Son, and the little daughter of Jairus, for they rose to die again; but I shall be the first to leave the sepulchre freed from the necessity of thither returning, and because I shall live again three days after my burial, so shall ye on the morn of the last great day." In a metaphorical sense of a *spiritual* life, thus, "Because I live a life of intercession for you at the right hand of God, ye shall live a life of grace and peace while you continue on earth, and a life of glory hereafter in heaven."

It is more to our purpose this morning to accept the first exposition, and to endeavour to *realise* for our dear departed ones and for ourselves, the resurrection and those good things that God hath stored up for those who unfeignedly love Him.

Of course the resurrection of the just at the last day presupposes endless blessings afterwards. If there were no presence of God in which we shall bask, no heaven of unutterable happiness in which we shall spend an interminable existence, if there were no Holy Angels whose voices will blend with ours in singing the praises of the Lamb, no sainted departed ones with whom we cannot doubt for a moment we shall have a blessed reunion, how would the resurrection avail us? We should have nothing to rise for. Death might have kept us in thralldom. Corruption might have held complete sway over us. But no—the resurrection is the commencement of a new state of things. *Jesus* has risen, *we* shall rise. *Jesus* has ascended into heaven, *we* shall follow His footsteps.

Jesus lives! no longer now
Can thy terrors, Death, appal us;
Jesus lives! by this we know
Thou, O Grave, canst not enthrall us.

Jesus lives! henceforth is death
But the *gate* of Life immortal;
This shall calm our trembling breath,
When we pass its gloomy portal.

"Because I live, ye shall live also." My brethren, what solid consolation, what inward peace, is conveyed to us when we read these words, especially after having lost one who we *know* has died in Jesus.

It is but natural that the tear will flow and emotions will rise in the heart, even as they did in Him, who was truly man and truly God, whose heart repeatedly overflowed, while He was on earth, with the tenderest sympathy and most sensitive regard. *Still*, in the sincere Christian, excessive sorrow gives way before the refreshment of the Holy Ghost, who enables us by his Holy influence on the heart to bring these words of Jesus *home* to us and reveals to us their most blessed meaning.

But supposing one leaves us who has not led a decided life, whose life has shown no striking resemblance to that of the great Conqueror of the grave, one who was not conspicuous for any great parts. I fear, in this case, a feeling of doubt must ever pervade our minds. Certainly the existence will be one of endless duration, quite as much so as in the former case, but the Bible tells us it will be bereft of all joyousness, it will not depend upon the life of Jesus; there will be no true sequence here in the words, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

But the subject is of too mournful a nature to pursue now, and has, God be blessed, little to do with our present business.

When we read and ponder over these heavenly words, in reference to her whose sunny presence in this House of God we so sadly miss, while the heart aches at the separation, and the eye sheds involuntarily the silent tear, we can but rejoice to know that the application to her soul of the precious blood of Jesus has gained for her an endless life in the presence of her God.

It is true, in a vast number of cases, positive certainty as to the soul's landing place is denied us, we hope, and hope, and hope against hope, we *hope* till we believe; but here we can *begin* at belief without presumption.

If we know of a surety that one has gone hence, to be no more seen, whose salvation was made to depend on the finished work of Jesus Christ, who lived a life of faith which was day by day bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, whose motto was "holiness to the Lord," who acted upon that verse of Holy Writ, which defines true and undefiled religion to be, visiting the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and keeping unspotted from the world, *then*, on the truth of God's own Word, we may *declare*, that person, at death, goes into the Paradise of God.

And such was *she*, who but recently was amongst us, but for whose body the silent tomb *now* is affording a temporary resting place,

and for whose soul Angels have, at their Master's bidding, opened the gates of Glory.

My brethren, in reference to that melancholy event, which none of us can easily forget, I have chosen a subject which should not beget in us a greater degree of sorrow than we have already experienced. I think the time has come when our mourning should be turned into a holy joy. *That* distress that has made such a strong impression upon us, that has banished from our minds during the last week every shade of joy, has been of a kind most genuine, most heartfelt, most heart-rending; but *now* we must give evidence of our Christianity by following the direction of the Holy Apostle, when he tells us "not to sorrow, even as others which have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

And yet, even at the risk of protracting your grief, I cannot allow such a life as her's to fade ever so little from your memories without recalling some of those strong lines in her character which must commend themselves to your approbation, and which I pray God may act as an incentive to renewed exertion on your part to follow an example so pure, so holy, so almost blameless; for, my brethren, although the ability or opportunity is not given

to all to pursue the *same* course in the journey of life, yet the *modes* of doing the work set her are the same as should be used by *us*, if we desire success in our several occupations. One could not help being struck with that absence of obtrusiveness and ostentation which was such a distinguishing feature of her character, so quietly did she move that she was working when no one saw her work. And *because* she devoted herself with so much zeal in such a *retiring* way to the good of this little town and was unknown, with few exceptions, outside this small community, her honoured name will not be handed down to posterity with the same general enthusiasm as that of, say, Florence Nightingale, who won glory for herself amid the bloody battle fields; or of Baroness Burdett Coutts, whose philanthropic promptings have gained her the admiration of the world; or of Lady Strangford, who at this present time is performing the noble task of finding shelter and food for the Bulgarians; *still*, for all that, the work done in her own unostentatious way will compare favourably with theirs, and will receive an equal reward at the Master's hands.

Most of us can bear witness to her gentle persuasiveness, the grasp of her intellect, her powers of attracting as well little children as grown men and women—to her possession of every characteristic which belongs to woman

as she should be, to her *capacity* for dealing with questions which do not *usually* engage the thoughts of her honoured sex.

Few knew the accuracy of her estimates for carrying on the work of the schools during the coming year, and no one but myself heard the testimony that was borne last week to the *exactness* which invariably accompanied the public banking transactions which necessarily devolved upon her.

Written on one of the walls of this Chapel is a laudatory inscription, bearing reference to one who for forty years ministered in this place, and with *equal propriety* I may transfer it to her, who for twenty-five years "was in and out amongst this people," "When the ear heard, then it blessed her, when the eye saw, it gave witness to her: because she delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless and him that had none to help him: the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her and she caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

Such was indeed the case.

Shall we not try to follow her footsteps? It rarely falls to the lot of a clergyman to have to point to so fair a model, but when he feels he can do so without fear of bringing upon himself the censure (attendant on fulsome adulation) of those among whom he ministers, it

is one of the most delightful tasks that falls to him to fulfil. May I not then, dear brethren, invite you this morning to imitate this eminent Saint of God in all holy conversation and fear?

"The time is short." "A few more years shall roll, a few more seasons come," and *then*, and *then*.—Surely you must think of this. Oh, in the words of that beautiful hymn, ask Jesus to wash you in His most precious blood, and to take away your sins, while you have time.

We all want to go, after this life is over, to endless bliss. We all want to live with Jesus and his bright company of Angels and Saints, but we must be holy here first; nothing unclean shall enter that pure abode. You would not like to be separated, I feel certain, from those whom you have loved so tenderly during your short sojourn here. God does not dislike us, I ween, to make this thought one of the motives for our perseverance. He regards most touchingly our human feelings.

Of course, as your revered chief pastor has told you so often, one sight of God, of however short a duration, will amply reward you for all you have undergone here, but inferior incentives to struggle on may have their place, without in any way detracting from the glory of God.

Then,

"Onward, Christian Soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before.
Christ, the Royal Master,
Leads against the foe,
Forward into battle,
See, His banners go."

[It has been thought that the following lines, sent anonymously to *The Worthing Intelligencer*, may not unfittingly be inserted here. They breathe a spirit of love and are as truthful as they are earnest.
—J. B. P.]

IN MEMORIAM M. R.

Servant of God, well done! The Master's praise
We hear in this sharp call from gath'ring grief;
Tho' while her pleasant presence stayed with us,
Scarce knew we how well done was all she did.
For she was humble: gently would have said,
In quiet, truthful tones, "Not very wise
Nor good am I—not learned, nor clever;
So with the little tasks of every day
Must I take pains, to offer of my best
To Him for whom I can do no great thing."
And beautiful in finish was her work
Of hand, or head, or heart; no detail held
Too small for utmost effort, till perfect
As the hands that wrought was all her handiwork.
Her powerful mind was wholly spent on plans,
Helpful, and wise, and wisely carried out,
To raise the poor into an easier place:
And sweet her personal ministry to them—
So tender to their pains—considerate—
Easy of access; suffering their sorrow,
Glad with their joy, and pitiful to him,
Poor soul! whom sin had overtaken;
So tender, tolerant, her humility!
The children, too; ah, they have lost a friend
Who lived to raise their lives, to win their hearts.
And they who in this dear work wrought with her
Have lost a friend, without whom their sad hands
Fall helpless, and the work seems desolate.
Into the holy chamber of her life,
Her daughter's place, we scarce may follow her:
Only, would any daughter know how best,
How perfectly to bless a parent's life,
Let her come here and learn.

